

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SUBJECT: COMMENTS BY AUSTRIAN SOCIALIST DEPUTY

BLECHA ON DISCUSSION WITH USDOD OFFICIAL

1. AUSTRIAN RADIO-TV CARRIED INTERVIEW EVENING APRIL 8 WITH AUSTRIAN SOCIALIST PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTY KARL BLECHA, WHO IS VISITING US AT USG INVITATION, INTERPRETING BLECHA'S DISCUSSION WITH DOD BRIGADIER GENERAL LOCKWELL IN SUCH FASHION AS TO SUGGEST US SIDE SAID THAT AUSTRIA DOES NOT NEED AMERICAN INTERCEPTORS (F-5-E) TO IMPROVE CREDIBILITY OF ITS NEUTRALITY POLICY AND THAT F-5-E PATROL FLIGHTS WOULD NECESSARILY LEAD TO VIOLATIONS OF AIR SPACE OF ADJOINING COUNTRIES.

2. BLECHA'S COMMENTS HAVE NOW BEEN PICKED UP BY AUSTRIAN PRESS; DIE PRESSE OF APRIL 10 CARRIED FULLEST REPORT UNDER HEADLINE "PESSIMISTIC VIEW
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OF AUSTRIAN DEFENSE POLICY" ALONG WITH WHAT

DESCRIBED AS INITIAL REACTION OF AUSTRIAN DEFENSE
MINISTRY AS FOLLOW:

"IN COURSE OF HIS AMERICAN TOUR, SOCIALIST MP
BLECHA ALSO HAD TALKS WITH POLITICAL-MILITARY
EXPERTS AT STATE DEPARTMENT ON SUBJECT OF AUSTRIAN
NATIONAL DEFENSE. ACCORDINGLY - THUS BLECHA IN
HIS STATEMENT FOR AUSTRIAN RADIO-TV - PENTAGON
IN GIVING EXCELLENT REMARKS TO AUSTRIAN ARMY.
THEY ARE OF THE OPINION THAT AUSTRIA'S ARMED
FORCES ARE ENTIRELY SUFFICIENT.

"THE AMERICANS, BLECHA SAID, DO NOT EVEN CONSIDER
PURCHASE OF INTERCEPTORS AS NECESSITY TO GUARD
NEUTRALITY BUT ENVISAGED ORDERING OF NORTHROP
"TIGER" PLANES COULD ENHANCE AUSTRIAN PEOPLE'S
FEELING OF SECURITY. WITH RESPECT TO THESE
PRONOUNCEMENTS, BLECHA REFERS TO STATEMENTS OF
HEAD OF PENTAGON OFFICE FOR NATON, GENERAL HARRISON
LOCKWELL.

"THIS COMMENTARY, RATED BY MANY AS A PURPOSEFUL
REPORT MADE TO FIT IN WITH DEFENSE POLICY OF
KREISKY GOVERNMENT, HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE
AMAZEMENT IN AUSTRIAN ARMY CIRCLES. IT IS ARGUED
THAT AMERICANS, TOO, ARE AWARE OF DIFFICULT
ATTEMPT TO ORGANIZE AN AUSTRIAN ARMY WITH CREDIBLE
DEFENSE POTENTIAL. THIS APPLIES IN PARTICULAR
TO ESTABLISHMENT OF A READY FORCE AND TO MOBILITY
OF MILITIA. FEDERAL ARMY HAS NOT YET OVERCOME
LOW POINT OF RESTRUCTURING, ALTHOUGH SITUATION HAS
SOMEWHAT IMPROVED. NATO ITSELF CONTINUES TO HOLD
PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF DEFENSE POTENTIAL (OF AUSTRIA)."

3. EMBASSY'S READING OF BLECHA'S RADIO-TV INTER-
VIEW AND SUMMARY OF LOCKWELL'S REMARKS AS PROVIDED
TO DAO INDICATES DISPARITY IN WHAT LOCKWELL REPORTEDLY
SAID TO BLECHA. WE ARE PREPARED PRIVATELY TO ATTRIBUTE
DIFFERENCES IN INTERPRETATION TO LANGUAGE
DIFFICULTIES, BLECHA'S PERSONAL POLITICAL
AMBITIONS AND PAST OPPOSITION TO MAJOR EXPENDI-
TURES FOR DEFENSE OR TO INCORRECT CONCLUSION
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DRAWN BY BLECHA'S AUSTRIAN INTERVIEWER. WHAT-
EVER THE REASON, HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT PREPARED
TO TAKE ISSUE WITH BLECHA COMMENTS PUBLICLY
AND PROPOSE TO QUERY BLECHA ABOUT HIS REMARKS
AFTER HIS RETURN TO AUSTRIA NEXT WEEK. WE

UNDERSTAND FROM DAO HERE THAT BLECHA HIMSELF
IS BEING PROVIDED WITH AUSTRIAN RADIO AND PRESS

REPORTS OF HIS COMMENTS AND MAY BE ASKED FROM
AUSTRIAN SIDE TO COMMENT ON INFORMAL UNOFFICIAL REACTION OF
AUSTRIAN DEFENSE MINISTRY TO HIS REMARKS. HUMES

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